# MULTI WORD EXPRESSIONS IN TAMIL

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## 0. Introduction

A unique definition for Multi Word Expression (MDE) is difficult to make. It can be strategically defined as a sequence of words which occur together expressing a cohesive or unified meaning. The following could be types of MWEs:

1. Compound verbs
2. Compound nouns
3. Compound adjectives
4. Compound adverbs
5. Compound postpositions
6. Other mixed combinations

## 1. Interpretation of compound verbs

The term ”compound” is used here as a cover term for all types of MWEs which consist of more than one word and together convey a cohesive or unified meaning.

| **Compound verbs** | **Synonymous simple verbs** |
|---|---|
| *kolai paNNu* 'kill' | *kol* 'kill' |
| *kaatal cey* 'love' | *kaatali* 'love' |
| *uraiy-aaTu* 'talk' | *peecu* 'talk' |
| *vaat-aaTu* 'argue' | argue |
| *kuuR-iTu* 'divide' | divide |

Tamil forms compound verbs (new verbs) by combing a noun with a verb which together constitutes a unified meaning. The NV compounds are otherwise known by the term conjunct verbs. Tamil coins new verbs by making use of this mechanism. The verb which makes the noun a verb is called verbalizer. The VV combinations also form new verbs (compound verbs).

### 1.1 The Formation of Compound Verbs

The following points have to be explored here:

1) Compound verb formation rules
2) The bases and the verbalizers which are involved in compound verb formation
3) Specific nature of the rules of compound verb formation
4) The productivity of the rules of compound verb formation

5) Lexicalization of the compound verb formation

## 1.2. Compound Verb Formation Rules

The formation of compound verb can be captured by a general rule of the following:

Base + verbalizer → Compound verb

Even a case inflected noun can combine with a verbalizer to form a compound verb.

Case inflected noun + verbalizer

*uTaippil* 'in breach'+ *pooTu* 'put'> *uTaippil pooTu* 'throw out, dump'
*tuukkil* 'in noose for hanging'+ *poTu* 'put' > *tuukkil pooTu* 'hang'
*kiTappil* 'in state of lying' + *pooTu* > *kiTappil pooTu* 'keep something pending'
*vaaTakaikku* 'rent_DAT' + *viTu* 'leave' > *vaaTakaikku viTu* 'give for rent'

Certain non-finite forms of verbs combine with a set of verbs to form compound verbs. Accordingly, the above general rule can be specified into the following rules:

Noun + verbalizer → Compound verb
Non-finite verb + verb → Compound verb

Apart from nouns, *ceytu*-type of verbal forms and *ceyya*-type of verbal forms (non-finite forms) can be combined with a verb to form compounds. (These are different form Main Verb+ Auxiliary verb(s) combinations.)

Examples:
*ceytu*-type of verbal forms + verb
*kaaTTi* 'having showed' + *koTu* 'give > *kaaTTikkoTu* 'betray'
*viTTu* 'having left' + *koTu* 'give' > *vittukkotu* 'make allowance for/yield'
*kaNTu* 'having seen' + *piTi* 'catch' > *kaNTupiTi* 'find out'

*ceyya*-type of verbal forms + light verb
*tavaRa* 'to let fail' + *viTu* 'leave' > *tavaRaviTu* 'miss'
*tooRka* ' to let fail' + *ati* 'beat > *torkati* 'defeat'

## 1.3. Bases

Base is the first constituent of a compound verb. As the compound verbs fulfill the immediate need of the Tamil speakers, the bases are extracted not only from Tamil source but also from other languages like Sanskrit and English. In modern Tamil, a lot of English bases are used by the educated people.

Examples:
Compound verbs with bases from Tamil source

*payiRci* 'training'+ *aLi* > *payiRciyaLi* 'train'
*viTai* 'farewell' + *koTu* > *vitaikoTu* 'bid farewell'
*niiccal* 'swimming'+ *aTi* > *niiccalaTi* 'swim'

Compound verbs with bases from Sanskrit source
*koopam* 'anger' + *paTu* > *koopappaTu* 'feel angry'
*cantooSam* 'happiness' + *paTu* > *cantooSappaTu* 'feel happy'
*vicaaraNai* 'investigation' + *cey* > *vicaaraNai cey* 'investigate'

Compound verbs with bases from English source
*areenj* 'arrange' + *paNNu* > *arenj paNNu* 'arrange'
*avuT* 'out' + *aaku* > *avuTaaku* 'exit/bowl out'
*aTmiT* 'admit' + *cey* > *aTmiTcey* 'admit'

The bases are borrowed as nouns even if they belong to different grammatical category in the source language.

Examples:
*aakT* 'act' + *paNNu* > *aakTpaNNu* 'act'
*aap* 'off' + *paNNu* > *aappaNNu* 'put off'
*in* 'in' + *paNNu* > *inpaNNu* 'tug in'

'Act' is a verb in English which is borrowed as a noun in Tamil; 'off' and 'in' are prepositions in English which are borrowed in Tamil as nouns. The base which forms the constituent of a compound can belong to any one of the following grammatical categories: noun, verbal participle, onomatopoeic word. The noun could be simple, compound or derived.

Examples:
Simple Noun + Verbalizer
*araTTai* 'chat (N)' + *aTi* > *araTTaiyaTi* 'chat'
*uRuti* 'firmness' + *aLi* > *uRutiyaLi* 'confirm'
*cuuRai* 'scattering' + *aaTu* > *cuRaiyaaTu* 'plunder'
*vazakku* 'case; suit' + *aaTu* > *varakkaaTu* 'argue a case'

Derived noun + Verbalizer
*aaRutal* 'consolation' + *aLi* > *aaRutal aLi* 'console'
*celavu* 'expense' + *azi* > *celavazi* 'spend'
*toTarpu* 'contact'+ *koL* > *toTarpukoL* 'contact'
*veRuppu* 'dislike'+ *uuTTu* > *veRuppuuTTu* 'cause dislike'
[*aaRu* 'become cold', *cel* 'go', *toTar* 'follow', *veRu* 'dislike']

CompoundNoun + Verbalizer
Noun + Noun + Verbalizer
*pulan* + *vicaraNai* > *pulanvicaaraNai* 'investigation' + *cey*>
*pulanvicaaraNai cey* 'investigate'

Derived Noun + Noun + Verbalizer

*naTai* + *muRai* > *naTaimuRai* 'practice' + *paTuttu* > *naTaimuRaippaTuttu* 'put into practice'

Verbal participle form + Noun + Verbalizer
*parintu* + *urai* > *parinturai* 'recommendation' + *cey* > *parindturai cey* 'recommend'

Verb stem + Noun + Verbalizer
*paRi* 'snatch'+ *mutal* > *paRimutal* 'confiscation'+ *cey* 'do' *paRimutal cey* 'confiscate'
*kuttu* 'hit' + *caNTai* > *kuttuccaNTai* 'boxing' + *pooTu* 'put' > *kuttuccaNTai pooTu* 'perform boxing'

Onomatopoeic Word + Verbalizer
*paLic* + *iTu* > *paLicciTu* 'flash; shine'
*tiTukku* + *iTu* > *tiTukkiTu* 'be alarmed'

**1.4 Verbalizers**

There are at least thirty nine verbs which can be claimed to function as verbalizers to form compound verbs from bases.

| **Sl.No** | **Verbalizers with core meaning** | **Examples of Compound verbs in which the verbalizers form a part** |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | *aTi* 'beat' | *kaN* 'eye' + *aTi* > *kaNNaTi* 'wink' |
| 2 | *aTai* 'get' | *muTivu* 'end' + *aTai* > *muTivaTai* 'come to an end' |
| 3 | *aLi* 'give' | *paricu* 'prize' + *aLi* > *paricaLi* 'award' |
| 4 | *aaku* 'become' | *veLi* 'outside + *aaku* > *veLiyaaku* 'come out' |
| 5 | *aakku* 'produce' | *coRu* 'cooked rice' + *aakku* > *coRaakku* 'cook rice' |
| 6 | *aaTu* 'move' | *kuuttu* 'drama' + *aaTu* > *kuuttaaTu* 'act' |
| 7 | *aTTu* 'swing' | *ciir* 'orderliness' + *aaTTu* > *ciiraaTTu* 'tend lovingly' |
| 8 | *aaRRu* 'perform' | *paNi* 'work' + *aaRRu* > *paNiyaaRRu* 'work' |
| 9 | *iTu* 'put' | *paarvai* 'look' + *iTu* > *parvaiyiTu* 'inspect' |
| 10 | *uRu* 'obtain' | *keeLvi* 'hearsay' + *uRu* > *keeLviyuRu* 'get to know' |
| 11 | *uRuttu* 'trouble' | *tunpu* 'suffering' + *uRuttu* > *tunpuRuttu* 'cause suffering' |
| 12 | *uuTTu* 'give' | *ninaivu* 'rememberance' + *uuTTu* > *ninaivuuTTu* 'remind' |
| 13 | *eTu* 'take' | *ooyvu* 'rest' + *eTu* > *ooyvetu* 'take rest' |
| 14 | *eytu* 'obtain' | *maraNam* 'death' + *eytu* > *maraNameytu* 'die' |
| 15 | *eel* 'accept' | *patavi* 'position' + *eel* > *pataviyeel* 'take office' |
| 16 | *eeRu* 'rise' | *cuuTu* 'heat' + *eeRu* > *cuTteeRu* 'become hot' |
| 17 | *eeRRu* 'raise' | *veLi* 'outside' + *eeRRu* > *veLiyeeRRu* 'expel' |
| 18 | *kaTTu* 'tie' | *iiTu* 'compensation' + *kaTTu* > *iiTukaTTu* 'make up' |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 19 | *kattu* 'show' | *acai* 'desire' + *kaaTTu* 'show' > *aacaikaaTTu* 'lure; tempt' |
| 20 | *kuuRu* 'say' | *puRam* 'back' + *kuru* > *purangkuuRu* 'backbite' |
| 21 | *koTu* 'give' | *peeccu* 'conversation' + *koTu* > *peeccukkoTu* 'initiate a talk' |
| 22 | *koL* 'get' | *toTarpu* 'contact' + *koL* > *totarpukoL* 'contact' |
| 23 | *cey* 'do' | *vicaaraNai* 'investigation' + *cey* > *vicaaraNai cey* 'investigate' |
| 24 | *col* 'say' | *kooL* 'lie' + *col* > *kooL col* 'tell tale' |
| 25 | *taTTu* 'pat' | *maTTam* 'substandard' + *taTTu* > *maTTam taTTu* 'degrade' |
| 26 | *paTu* 'experience' | *veTkam* 'shyness' + *paTu* > *veTkappaTu* 'feel shy' |
| 27 | *paTuttu*'cause to experience' | *tunpam* 'suffering' + *paTuttu* >*tunpappaTuttu* 'cause to suffer' |
| 28 | *paNNu* 'do' | *yoocanai* 'thinking' + *paNNu* > *yoocanai paNNu* 'think' |
| 29 | *paar* 'see' | *veevu* 'spying' + *paar* > *veevupaar* 'spy' |
| 30 | *piTi* 'catch' | *aTam* 'obstinacy' + *piTi* > *aTampiTi* 'become obstinate' |
| 31 | *puri* 'do' | *maNam* 'marriage' + *puri* > *maNampuri* 'marry' |
| 32 | *peRu* 'get' | *ooyvu* 'rest' + *peRu* > *oyvu peRu* 'retire (from service)' |
| 33 | *poo* 'go' | *cooram* 'adultery' + *poo* > *coorampoo* 'commit adultery' |
| 34 | *pooTu* 'drop' | *cattam* 'sound' + *pooTu* > *cattam pooTu* 'shout' |
| 35 | *muuTTu* 'make' | *koopam* 'anger' + *muuTTu* > *koopamuuTTu* 'cause anger' |
| 36 | *vaa* 'come' | *valam* 'right' + *vaa* > *valamvaa* 'go round' |
| 37 | *vaangku* 'get' | *veelai* + *vaangku* > *veelaivaangku* 'extract work' |
| 38 | *viTu* 'leave' | *muuccu* 'breath' + *viTu* > *muuccuviTu* 'breathe' |
| 39 | *vai* 'keep' | *aTaku* 'pledge' + *vai* > *aTakuvai* 'pledge' |

It has to be noted here that all the verbalizing verbs are native Tamil words. Not all the verbs listed above are actually used as verbalizers. The number of compound verbs formed from each verbalizer also varies.

### 1,5. Dependency of Verbalizers on Bases

It is generally the case that the compound verbs acquire syntactic and semantic features based on the characteristic features of the bases. For example, the compound verbs *accaTi* (<*accu* 'printing' + *aTi 'beat'*) 'print', *koLLaiyaTi* (<*koLLai* 'plundering' + *aTi 'beat'*) 'plunder' and *viiNaTi* (<*viiN* 'waste' + *aTi 'beat'*) 'waste' are transitive verbs capable of receiving an object retaining the characteristic feature of *aTi* 'beat' as a main verb. But the compound verbs such as *niical aTi* 'swim', *perumaiyaTi* 'boast' and *araTTaiyaTi* 'chat' are intransitive verbs differing from the characteristic feature of *aTi* as the main verb and thus reflecting the influence of the features of the bases. Conversely,

*kaLavaaTu* (<*kaLavu* 'theft' + *aaTu*) 'steal', *veeTTaiyaaTu* (<*veeTTai* 'hunting' + *aaTu*) 'hunt' and *cuRaiyaaTu* (<*cuuRai* 'plundering' + *aaTu*) 'plunder' are transitive verbs differing from the characteristic feature of the verbalizing verb *aaTu* 'move to and fro' which is basically an intransitive verb. But the compound verbs *uraiyaaTu* (<*urai* 'speech' + *aaTu*) 'talk' and *vaataaTu* (<*vaatu* 'argument' + *aaTu*) 'argue' are intransitive verbs retaining the characteristic feature of *aaTu* as a main verb. *yookamaTi* (<*yokam* 'luck' + *aTi*) is capable of receiving a dative subject and thus differing from the verb *aTi* which receives a nominative subject.

Examples:
*raman naayai aTittaan* 'Rama beat the dog'
*ramanukku yookam aTittatu* 'Rama got luck'

The compound verb *cuuteeRu* 'become hot' is a one place verb, where as its constituent verb *eeRu* 'climb' is a two place verb.

Examples:
*kurangku marattil eeRiyatu* 'the monkey climbed the tree'
*niir cuuTeeRiyatu* 'the water got heated'

The possibility of verbalizers getting combined with the same base noun leads to the formation of synonymous compound verbs.

Examples:
N + *iTu* synonymous with N + *pooTu*
*caNTaiyiTu* 'quarrel' - *caNTaipooTu* 'quarrel'
N + *uRu* synonymous with N + *aTai*
*tunpamuRu* 'suffer' - *tunpappaTu* 'suffer'
N + *aakku* synonymous with N + *paTuttu*
*kuNamaakku* 'cure' - *kuNappaTuttu* 'cure'
N + *cey* synonymous with N + *koTu*
*tanamcey* 'give free' - *tanamkoTu* 'give free'

The same base can give different meanings with different verbalizers.

Examples:
*veLi* 'outside' + *iTu* 'put' > *veLiyiTu* 'publish'
*veLi* 'outside + *paTu* 'suffer' > *veLippaTu* 'come to be known or seen'
*veLi* 'outside' + *eeRu* 'climb'> *veliyeeRu* 'come out quit'
*veLi* 'outside + *eeRRu* 'climb' > *veLiyeeRu* 'expel'

Same base can combine with different verbalizers by bringing out their polysemous nature.

Examples:
*iiTu* 'substitute' + *eeRRu* > *iiTeeRRu* 'fulfill'

*iiTu* ‘substitute’+ *kaTTu* > *iiTukaTTu* 'make good'
*iiTu* “substitute’ + *koTu* > *iiTukoTu* 'make up to'
*iiTu* ‘substitute’+ *paTu* > *iiTupaTu* 'engage; involve'
*iiTu* ‘substitue’+ *vai* > *iiTuvai* 'pledge'

## 1.6. Dynamics of Compound Verb Formation

The dynamism involved in the formation of compound verbs can be listed as follows:

1. For fulfilling the need
2. To bring out different shades of meaning
3. Due to the development of analytical nature
4. For showing stylistic variation

### 1.6.1. **Fulfilling the Need**

It is natural that language speakers form new words to express their new ideas and experience. As the speakers are exposed to new ideas and experience due to their contact with foreign language, they resort to form new verbs by making use of bases from the foreign language and Tamil verbs as verbalizers.

Examples:
*amal* 'implementation'+ *paTuttu* > *amalpaTuttu* 'implement'
*ooTTu* 'vote' + *pooTu* > *ooTuppooTu* 'cast vote'
*cipaaricu* 'recommendation' + *cey* > *ciiparicu cey* 'recommend'
*vivaakarattu* 'divorce' + *cey* > *vivaakarattu* cey 'divorce'

*amul* is a base borrowed from Hindi, *vooTTu* is from English, *cipaaricu* is from Urdu and *vivaakarattu* is from Sanskrit. Even Tamil nouns have been used as bases to fulfill their need.

Examples:
*accu* 'print' + *aTi* > *accaTi* 'print'
*tiTTam* 'plan' + *pooTu* > *tiTTam pooTu* 'plan'
*vaakku* 'word' + *aLi* > *vaakkaLi* 'promise/vote'
*veLi* 'outside' + *iTu* > *veLiyiTu* 'publish'
*maRiyal* 'strike' + *cey* > *maRiyal cey* 'perform strike'

### 1.6.2. Different Shades of Meaning

Compound verbs have been formed to bring out different shades of meaning. The following differences in shades of meaning can be listed:

1) State vs. change of state
2) Inceptive vs. terminative
3) Direct vs. indirect

4) Low status vs. high status
5) General vs. specific
6) Specified subject vs. unspecified subject
7) Subject oriented vs. indirect object oriented
8) Explicit vs. implicit

### 1.6.2.1 State vs. Change of State

While simple verb denotes the state of a feeling, the compound verb which is related to it will denote change of state of feeling.

Examples:
*avaL varuntinaaL* 'she felt sorry'
*aval varuttam aTaintaaL* 'she felt sorry'

### 1.6.2.2. Terminative vs. Inceptive

While simple verb denotes a terminative meaning, the related compound verb denotes inceptive meaning.

Examples:
*paya* 'be afraid' vs. *payam + eTu* 'take' > *payameTu* 'start feeling afraid'
*avaL payantaaL* 'she was afraid'
*avaLukku payameTuttatu* 'she started feeling afraid'
*paci* 'feel hungry' vs. *paciyeTu* 'start feeling hungry'
*avaLukkup pacittatu* 'she felt hungry'
*avaLukkup paciyeTuttatu* 'she started feeling hungry'

### 1.6.2.3. Direct Vs. Indirect

While the simple verb denotes direct action, the compound verb related to it denotes indirect action.

Examples:
*avaL avanai azaittaaL* 'she invited him'
*avaL avanukku azaippu viTuttaaL* 'she invited him through somebody'
*avaL avanai aatarittaaL* 'she supported him
*avaL avanukku aataravu koTuttaaL* 'she gave him support'

### 1.6.2.4. Low Status Vs. High Status

While simple verb denotes the low status of subject or object, the compound verb which is related to it denotes the high status of subject or object.

Examples:
*avarkaL avanaip putaittaarkaL* 'they buried him'

*avarkaL avanai aTakkam ceytaarkaL* 'they buried him'

**1.6.2.5. General Vs. Specific**

While simple verb denotes a general meaning, the related compoundverb denotes specific meaning.

Examples:
*aval avanai vicaarittaL* 'She enquired him'
*aval avanai vicaaraNai ceytaaL* 'she interrogated him'

**1.6.2.6. Concrete Sense Vs. Abstract Sense**

While simple verb denotes concrete sense, the compoundverb denotes abstract sense.

Examples:
*avaL avan kaiyait taTuttaaL* 'she obstructed his hand'
*avar cinimaavait taTai ceytaar* 'he banned the cinema'
*avaL anta puuvai moontal* 'she smelled the flower
*naay mooppam piTittatu* 'the dog sniffed'

**1.6.2.7. Specified Agent Vs. Unspecified Agent**

While the simple verb specifies agent, the compound makes the agent unspecified.

Examples:
*avan vilaiyai nirNayittaan* 'he fixed the price'
*vilai nirNayam aayiRRu* 'the price is fixed'
*avan puttakam piracurittaan* 'he published the book'
*puttakam piracuram aayiRRu* 'the book is published'

**1.6.2.8. Subject Oriented Vs. Indirect Object Oriented**

While one type specifies subject orientation of the action, the other type specifies indirect object oriented action.

Examples:
*avan aaRutal aTaintaan* 'he got satisfied'
*avan avaLukku aaRutal aLittaan* 'he consoled her'

**1.6.2.9. Explicit Vs. Implicit**

While one type of compound verbs denote expressed or explicit feeling, the other type of compound verbs denote implicit feeling.

Examples:
*avan avaLiTam varuttappaTTaan* 'he expressed his unhappiness to her'

*avan varuttamaTaintaan* 'he became unhappy'

### 1.6.3. Development of Analytic Nature

A language can become analytic or synthetic in course of time. Modern Tamil appears to be more of analytic in nature than old Tamil. It appears that one or two compound verbs are formed parallel to a simple verb.

| **Simple form** | **Analytic form** |
|---|---|
| *utavu* 'help' | *utavicey* 'help' |
| *camai* 'cook' | *camaiyal cey* 'cook' |
| *muyal* 'try' | *muyaRcicey* 'try' |
| *mayangku* 'become unconscious' | *mayakkamaTai* 'become unconscious' |
| *koopi* 'show anger' | *koopappaTu* 'show anger' |

### 1.6.4. Bringing Out Stylistic Differences

The preference of simple for compound or vice versa can bring in stylistic difference.

Examples:

| **Literary style** | **Spoken style** |
|---|---|
| *aaL* 'rule' | *aaTci cey* 'rule' |
| *irangku* 'show pity' | *irakkappaTu* 'show pity' |
| *muyal* 'try' | *muyaRci cey* 'try' |

### 1.7 NV combinations of different sort

*peN paar* (woman see) 'look for a bride' vs. *peNNaip paar* 'see a woman'
*maapiLLai paar* (bridegroom see) 'look for a bridegroom' vs. *maappiLaiyap* paar 'see the bridegroom'

### 1.8. N+V sequenceof different type

The light verbs like *aTi* (beat), *pooTu* (put), *iTu* (put) come singly and their interpretation depends on the subject or object noun which precedes them.

Example

**Dependency on the subject noun**

kaaRRu aTi-kkiRaRatu 'wind blows'
wind beat_PRES_it
mazai aTi-kkiRathu 'it rains'
rain beat_PRES_it

veyil aTikkiRatu ‘it shine’
sun shine beat_PRES_it
kuLir aTikkiRatu
cold beat_PRES_it ‘It is cold’
avanukkuk kaayccal aTikkiRatu ‘He has fever’
he_DAT fever beat_PRE_it

**Dependency on the object noun**

maalai pooTu (garland put) ‘garland’
ceruppu pooTu (sandal put) ‘wear sandal’
kaNNaaTi pooTu (spectacle put) ‘wear sectale’
eNNai pooTu (oil put) ‘put oil’
puuTTu pooTu (put lock) ‘lock’

Though they look like the cases NV compounds, they appear to be different.

## 2. Problem of meaning interpretation of adjectives

A set of adjectives depend upon the nouns they attribute for the interpretation of their meaning. The following examples in Tamil will illustrate this:

*paccai kuzan*tai (green child) ‘young child’

*paccai poy* (green lie) ‘extreme lie’

*paccai irattam* (green blood) ‘raw blood’

*paccai kaaykaRi* (green vegetable) ‘raw vegetable’

*paccai arici* (raw rice) ‘raw rice’

*paccai miLakaay* ‘green chilly’

*paccai taNNiir* (green water) ‘water (in general as opposed to cold water and hot water)’

Though *nalla* ‘good’ can attribute any noun, its interpretation depends on the noun which follows it.

nalla peenaa ‘good pen’

nalla peN ‘good woman’

nalla katti ‘good knife/sharp knife’

nalla aaciriyar ‘good teacher/efficient teacher’

*nalla paampu* (good snake) is not to be interpreted as ‘good snake’, but as ‘cobra’. Even sandhi can make difference of meaing.

nalla eNNey (good oil) ‘good oil’

nalleNNey (good_oil) ‘jingly oil’

### 3. Structural Ambiguity

maNi kumaar teruvil oru peNNaip paarttaan
mani Kumar stree_LOC woman_ACC see_PAST_he

This can be interpreted at least in three ways: *maNi* as the subject and *kumaar teru* as the location, *maNi kumar* as the subject and *teru* as the location and *maNi kumaar teru* as the location. The unmarking of subject, object or genitive nouns cause structural ambiguity.

raajyacapaa mempar ramaNan viiTTukkuc cenRaar
Rajya sabha member Ramanan house_DAT go_PAST_he

This can be interpreted either as the “Rajya sabha member went to Ramanan’s house” or Rajaya sabha member whose name is Ramanan went to his house’ or “somebody went to Rajya sabha member Ramanan’s house”.

There are cases of N+N sequence in which the subject noun and object noun comes one after the other and the object is unmarked for accusative case. The common sense can interpret them correctly. But the MWE finder may find it as a single unit, which is not so. Probably the chunking rectifies the problem.

raaman maangkaay caapiTTaan
Ram mango eat_PAST_he

But if *raaman maangkaay* is a brand of mango pickle only NER can find the solution.

### 4. Difficulty in identifying the MV+MV combination form MV + auxiliary combination

avaL avanai paarttuviTTup poonaaL
she he_ACC see_PAST_ADVP leave_PAST_ADVP go_PAST_she
“She went after seeing him”

avaL anta paTTiyalaip paTittukkkoNTu poonaaL
she that list_ACC read_PAST_ADVP go_PAST_she
‘She went on reading the book’

**5. Different interpretations of compound nouns**

NN combinations are not same as for as the interpretation of their meaning is concerned.

**Endocentric compounds**: Here the head noun is carries the core meaning and the preceding one acts as an attribute. The meaning is inside the nouns.

Ex.

*aappiL pazam* ‘apple fruit’

*mallaikap puu* “jasmine flower’

Traditional grammars treat this type of compound as compounds where case inflections are dropped. A number of subtypes are identified by them based on the case inflection which it dropped.

Ex.

raaman puttakam ‘Rama’s book’

**Exocentric compound**: Here the unified meaning is outside the meaning of the compounded nouns.

*kaal naTai* (leg walking) ‘cattle’

*mara maNTai* (wood head) ‘fool’

*kazutaip puli* (donkey tiger) is not a type of tiger

*varik kutirai* (line horse) is not a type of horse.

*kaar kuzal* (black hair) ‘lady with black hair’

*tuungku muunjci* (sleep face) ‘lazy person’

toTTaal vaaTi (if touched wither' 'touch me not plant'

**Oppositional compound**: Here the preceding and the following nouns are of equal status.

*aaciriyar raamasaami* 'the teacher named Ramasamy'

*vazakkaRinjnjar iraamaanujam* 'the advocate named Ramanujam'

**Copulative compound**: Here the nouns come in sequence without the coordinator marker –*um*.

*maram ceTi koTikaL* (tree small_plant creepers) 'plants'

*cakootara cakootarikaL* (brother sisters) 'brothers and sisters'

**Compound without quality linking particle**: Here the quality linking element *poonRa* 'like' is absent.

*mati mukam* (moon face) 'moon like face'

*miin kaNkaL* (fish eyes) 'fish like eyes'

**Compound without verbal inflection**: Here the verbal base (in imperative form) is added to a noun to form a compound which is traditionally known by the term *vinaittokai* (combination in which the verbal inflection is dropped). The verb and noun together gives a unique meaning.

*ezutu kool* (write stick) 'writing stick'

*uutu kuzal* (blow tube) 'blowing tube'

*niiraaTu tuRai* (bathe place) 'bathing place'

curaNTu karuvi (scrape instrument) 'scrapper'

Any combination of two or more nouns can make a compound. But the meanings of these combinations are not predictable.

eNNey aalai (oil mill) 'oil mill' – the mill which produces oil

arici aalai (rice mill) 'rice mill' – the mill which makes riece from paddy

kaaRRu aalai (wind mill) – the mill which uses wind to function it

The interpretations vary depending on the context. For example pirincipaal naayaik kaaNavillai (Principla dog not found) could mean both ‘principal’s dog is missing’ or ‘principal who is a dog is missing’.

## 6. Conclusion

Every day new words are coined in mass media like newspaper etc. *manita kuNTu* ‘human bomb’ was coined only recently. A few years ago it was not understandable. Such coinages are found in plenty in written texts of various sorts. Somehow we understand them. Imparting this knowledge to the computer is a challenging task.